

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

A few thoughts as the summer season begins.....

It has been a long three days at BayCon (May 23-25th), in San Jose, but I am really enjoying it. This convention marks the beginning of the convention season for me. I've been having a ball talking to artists and looking at portfolios. Conventions can be one of the nicer sides to working in comics. I'm more than a little glad that all the different circumstances came together in just the right way to allow me the luxury of living the way I do. I'm not, perhaps, always satisfied with my performance (who is?) but that fact can be a good thing. I continue to meet people whose existence is a gentle push for me to take more chances - strive for more goals.

All of you who sit watching and listening (and questioning) at the panels, telling us what you are interested in seeing; all of you who drop by the table to say you like this book or are looking forward to the latest project; you give me that extra push to do one more thing you will enjoy. Life can be satisfying when you know you don't regret the chances you have taken. Thanks. But enough of this mushiness.

I'll close this with some odd and ends regarding some of the new titles Renegade is putting out. *Cases of Sherlock Holmes* has been very well received, and is currently Renegade's highest selling title. It's very satisfying to publish a book that I consider a highwater mark for artist Dan Day, and find that some people out there might just be looking for the same kind of reading I am. If this sounds like hype to you - it is simply that this was a "gambit" (how can you possibly lose with a character like Sherlock Holmes?) that has paid off both financially and artistically for me. That's a good feeling. I've had lots of mail on Crusoe's *Barefootz*, and can only say that I will do my best to talk Howard into doing more. I don't think it would take a lot of persuasion, as we have already talked about it a bit. Between *Barefootz* and Terry Beatty's *Phony Pages*, it is evident that a good humor book is still something this market doesn't have enough of. Of course, every publisher feels that he/she has the best, naturally. But I feel that the response to these books bears me out. The mail on *Phony Pages* has been great. Many of you expressed surprise that Terry did humor, which is actually Terry's first love. (Not that he doesn't love doing *Ms. Tree*, but as he put it, "I always thought I would do humor. I never saw myself as a serious cartoonist") So what's the verdict? Would you like to see more of this from Terry? *Silent Invasion* seems to have thrown some readers for a loop, but judging from our sales on the book, it is a feeling that they like! If you haven't checked this title out, please do! This affectionate look at 50's SCI-FI and UFO's is both a science-fiction tale and a mystery. Finally - Dan Day will be doing double duty for Renegade for a few months, when *MURDER* begins in August. Dan, and his brother David, will be doing Edgar Allan Poe tales for this three issue mini-series of psychological horror, along with such names as Ditko and Toth. I've already seen the first two issues, and it promises to be a real edge of your seat, creepy-crawlies up your spine type of book. Of course, that's only MY opinion. I suggest you check out the first issue and judge for yourself.

That's all for this month. I was supposed to have a friend of mine edit this piece, but somehow I have run out of time (again!) I can't need another assistant already!! See you at the conventions, or right here next month!!

Deni

RENEGADE APPEARANCES

Bob Burden (Flaming Carrot)

JULY 25-27 ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR

Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith)
Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)

Joe Sinardi (Maxwell Mouse Follies)

Michael Cherkas (The Silent Invasion)
Larry Hancock (The Silent Invasion)
Joe Judt (Strata)
Ray Murtaugh (Strata)
Jim Brozman (Strata)

JULY 31 - AUG 3 SAN DIEGO COMICCON

Max Collins (Ms. Tree)
Terry Beatty (Ms. Tree)
David Darrigo (Wordsmith)
Barb Rausch (Neil & Vicki)

Bob Burden (Flaming Carrot)
Dan Day (Cases of Sherlock Holmes)
Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)
Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith)
Deni Loubert (Publisher)

Please note that there will be a cocktail party at the Golden Apple Comic Shop, 7710 Melrose Ave. in Los Angeles on Tuesday August 5th. It will be hosted by The Golden Apple and Renegade Press as an informal get together for fans to talk to the artists and to see how a company like Renegade survives. Everyone from Renegade will be there (with the exception of R.G. Taylor from Wordsmith). It will run from 7-9 p.m., and probably spill over into the nearest bar, if I know Renegade. Everyone is welcome to come. Bring your friends, even if they don't read comics!!



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NO. 31

JULY 1986

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MAX COLLINS and
TERRY BEATTY'S

ms. TREE

HEY KIDS-
WHAT **TIME**
IS IT?



DYIN' TIME

ms. TREE

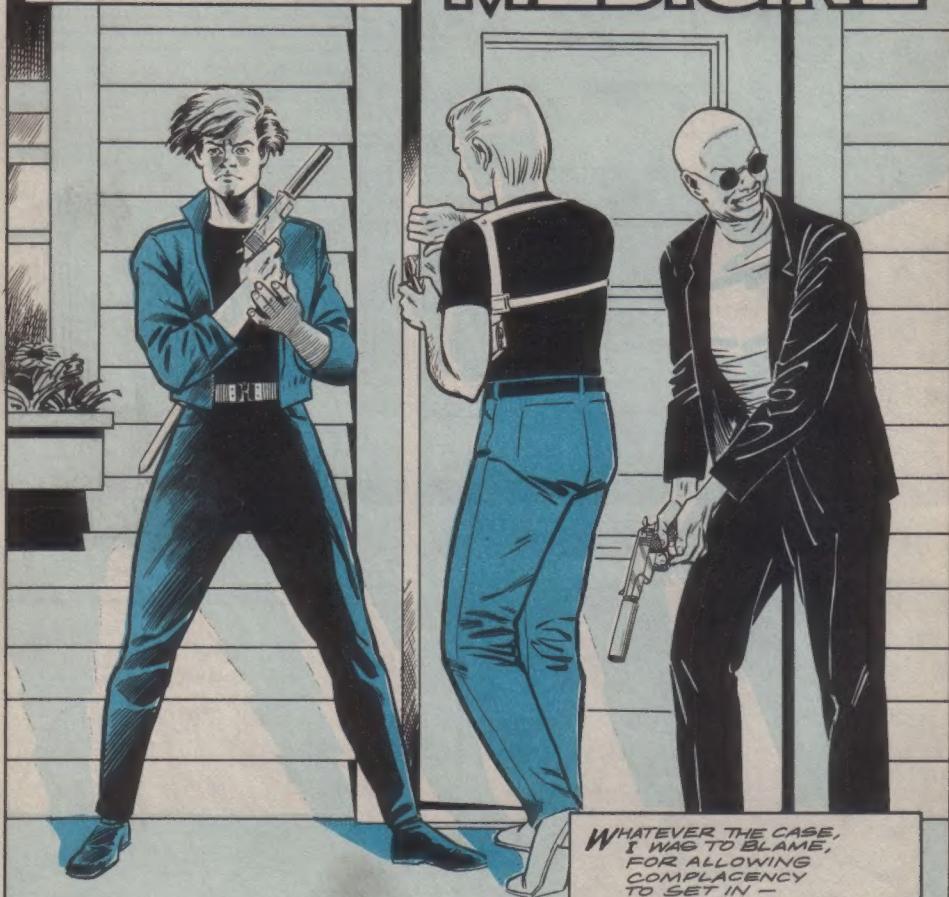
"THE OTHER CHEEK"

© 1986 by Max Collins
and Terry Beatty

I BLAME MYSELF.

PERHAPS IT WAS THIS PEACEFUL LITTLE COMMUNITY.
PERHAPS IT WAS THE COOL SUMMER BREEZE.
PERHAPS IT WAS THIS GINGERBREAD COTTAGE WHERE THE BOY'S GRANDMOTHER PLACED DOILIES ON EVEN THE TELEVISION.

TIME TO TAKE YOUR MEDICINE

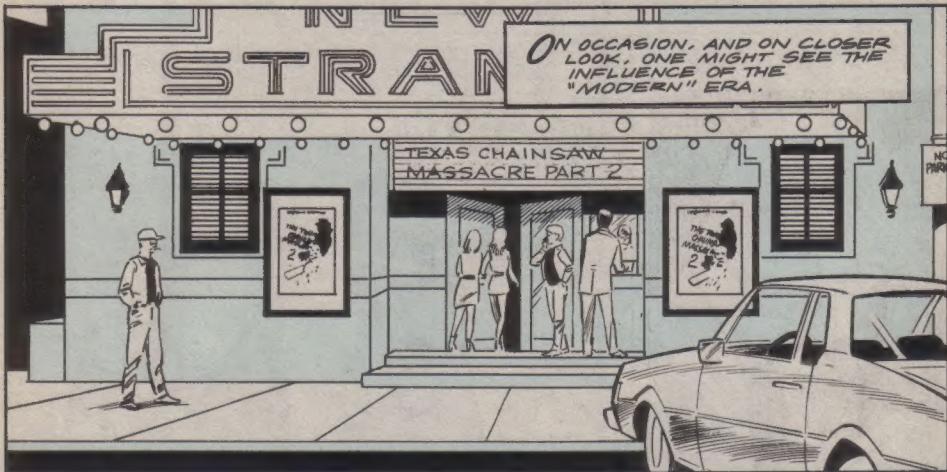


Chapter Five

BLOOMINGTON WAS THE SORT OF SLEEPY VILLAGE ONE MIGHT HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN THE AMERICA OF THE 1940S OR '50S.



ON OCCASION, AND ON CLOSER LOOK, ONE MIGHT SEE THE INFLUENCE OF THE "MODERN" ERA.



MY NAME IS BRYAN HAND. I WAS SCHOOLED IN ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER LAND ...



IT HAS BEEN MY RESPONSIBILITY, FOR SOME TIME NOW, TO TUTOR AND PROTECT YOUNG MICHAEL TREE, JR. "MIKE," HE PREFERENCES TO BE CALLED.



LOOK - MR. HAND, I DON'T WANNA BE A CREEP OR ANYTHING... I MEAN, YOU'RE A NICE GUY AND YOU TAUGHT ME A LOT OF COOL STUFF, BUT...

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO BE ALLOWED TO TRADE MY COMPANY FOR THAT OF YOUR PEERS?



IF THAT MEANS, KIDS
MY OWN AGE - YEAH.
WHEN?

SOON. WE'VE BEEN HERE A
WEEK, LAD... I'VE SEEN NO SIGN
THAT ANYONE IS WATCHING, HAS
FOLLOWED US TO YOUR NEW LIFE -

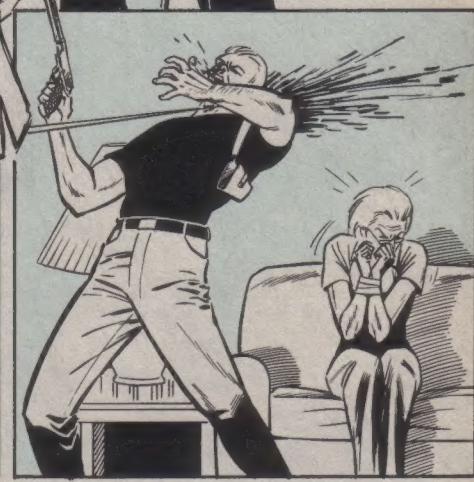


THAT'S COOL, BUT WHEN I START
SCHOOL, WILL I HAVE TO USE
THAT OTHER NAME? AND WHAT DO
I NEED TUTORING FOR
AFTER SCHOOL STARTS?

I'M AFRAID THE FALSE IDENTITY
IS A NECESSITY. AND I'LL
STOP TUTORING YOU, ONCE YOU'RE
IN CLASS, TILL THAT TIME, WE
NEED TO CONTINUE WORKING
TO CATCH YOU UP WITH OTHERS
YOUR AGE - STUDENTS WHO
DID NOT FOOLISHLY TAKE
THE ROAD.









THE NAME IS MEYERS.
SAM MEYERS, CAPTAIN,
STATE POLICE. THIS
WAS A BAD ONE.

HOW MANY
DEAD?

TWO. ANOTHER
MAY DIE.

THE
BRITISH
GUY?

YEAH.
BUT HE'S
PRETTY
TOUGH -

"HE'S ALREADY ON HIS WAY TO THE HOSPITAL. THE OTHER STIFF IS STILL INSIDE — TILL AFTER THE PHOTOS AND EVIDENTIARY PROCEDURE."

WHAT
HAPPENED
HERE?

THANKS FOR
CALLING,
CAPTAIN.

YOU BOTH HAD A RIGHT TO KNOW.
THE BOY'S BEEN KIDNAPPED, YOUR
MR. HAND WAS KNIFED, THOUGH HE'S
STILL ALIVE. FOR NOW.



MAYBE I
DESERVED THAT.

NO MAYBE
ABOUT IT.

YOU DON'T LIKE HER
BECAUSE SHE'S TWICE
THE MAN YOU ARE —
AND TWENTY TIMES
THE COP.



I DIDN'T BLAME VALER. MAYBE HE WAS
RIGHT. MAYBE I WISHED I COULD PUT
MY BADGE AWAY AND TAKE ON THE
SLOBS HEAD ON LIKE MS. TREE DID.

WHICH WAY
TO THE
HOSPITAL?

TWENTY MILES —
IN JEFFERSON.
I CAN GIVE YOU
DIRECTIONS ...



DAN AND
ROGER HAVE
BEEN WARNING
ME ...

WARNING
YOU?



THEY SAID SENATOR PALMA
WAS PULLING OUT THE
STOPs. THE MURDER OF
HIS ALIBI, BACKER, IS
SCARING OFF SOME OF
THE WITNESSES DAN AND
ROGER HAD CONVINCED
TO COME FORWARD...



THEY SAID PALMA WOULD DO SOMETHING TO TRY TO STOP US - ONCE AND FOR ALL. KEEP US FROM GOING PUBLIC WITH THE CASE AGAINST HIM -



I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T PART OF THAT.

PALMA DIDN'T KNOW THAT.



MR. HAND.

I FAILED YOU -



NO.
I FAILED MYSELF -
AND EVERYONE
AROUND ME.



SHALL WE GO?

IT'S TIME
FOR MY MEDICINE.



ON
SALE
NOW

TOR
BOOKS



True Detective
MAX ALLAN COLLINS

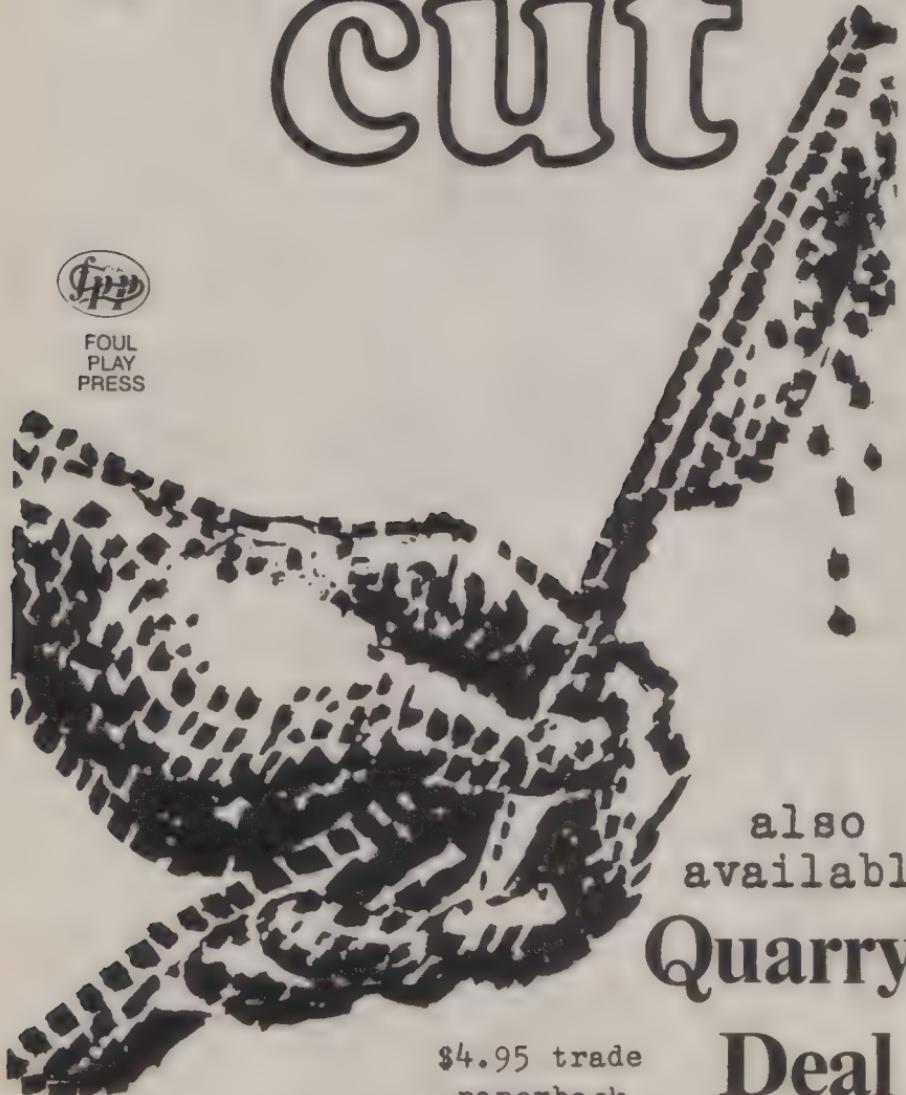
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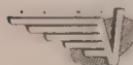
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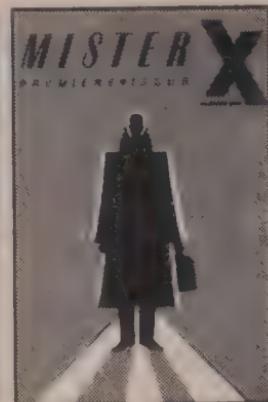


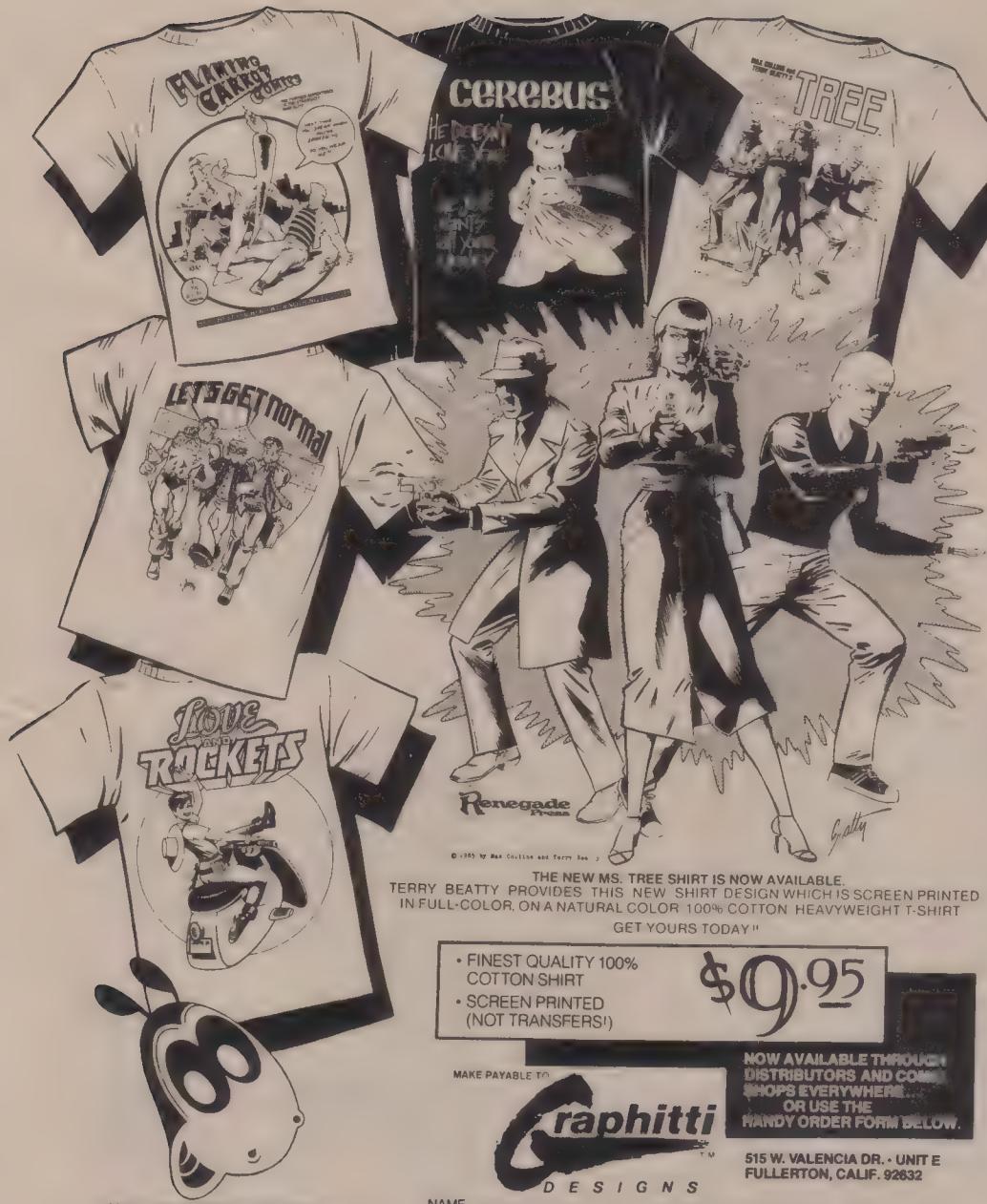
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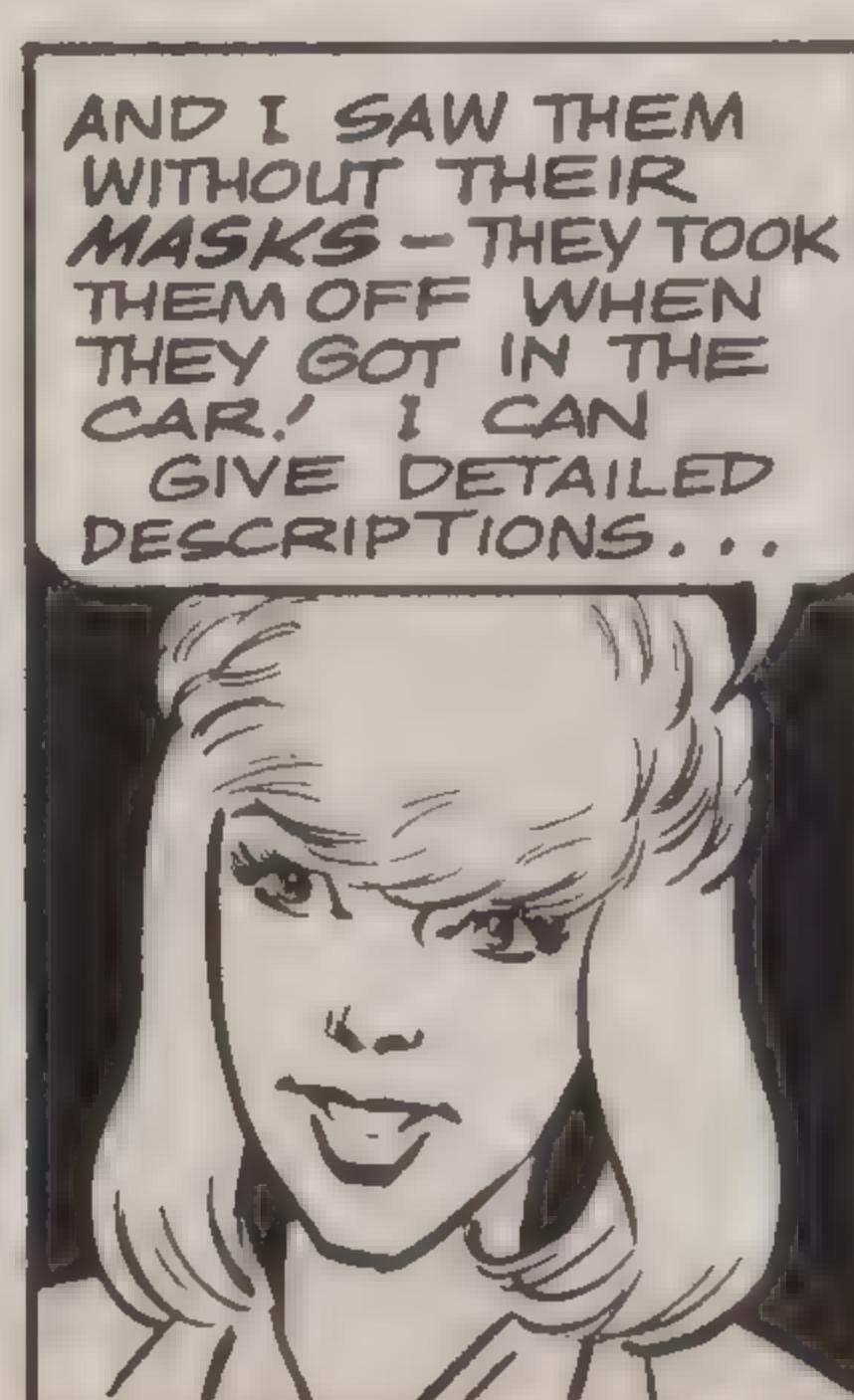
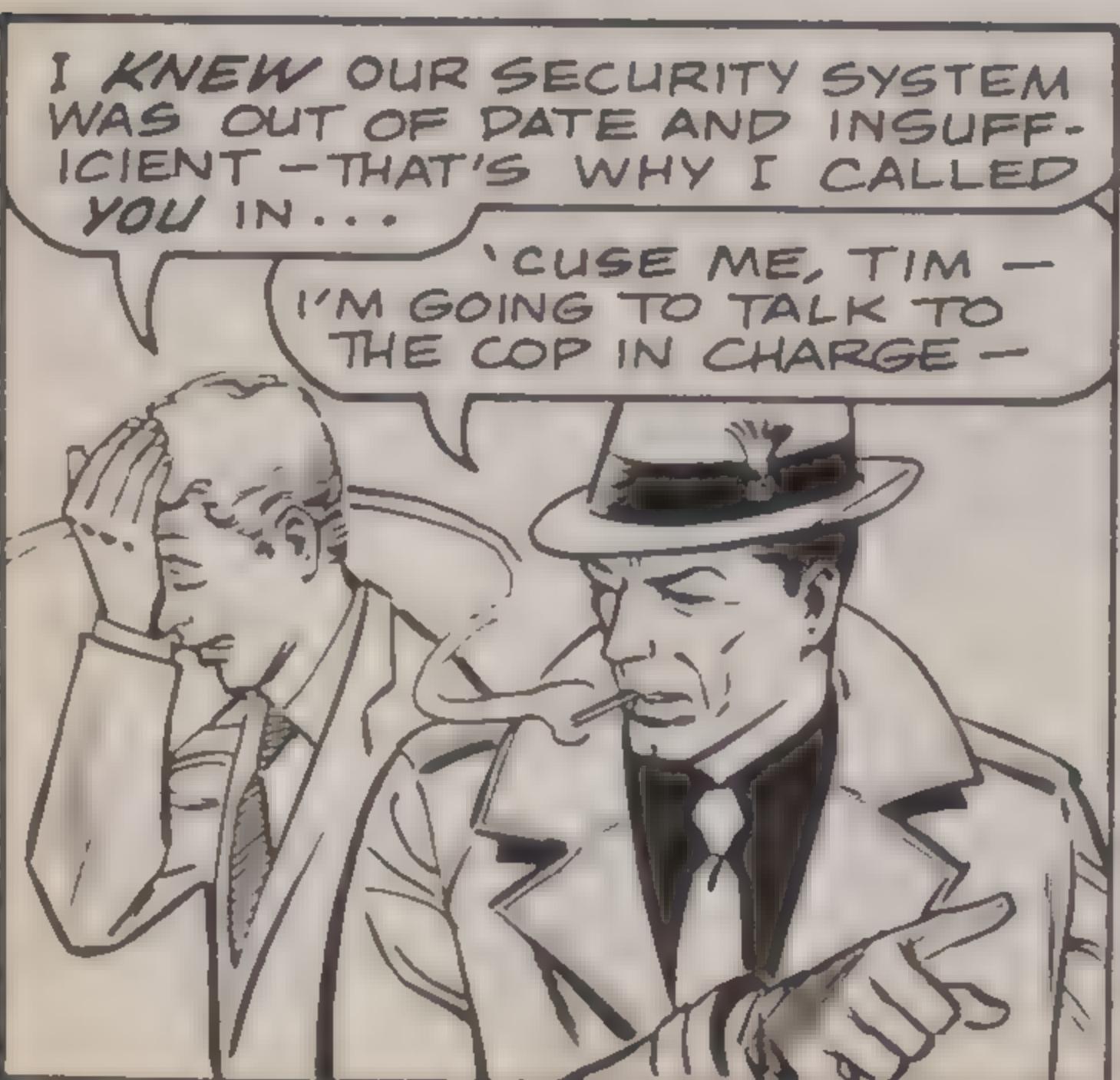
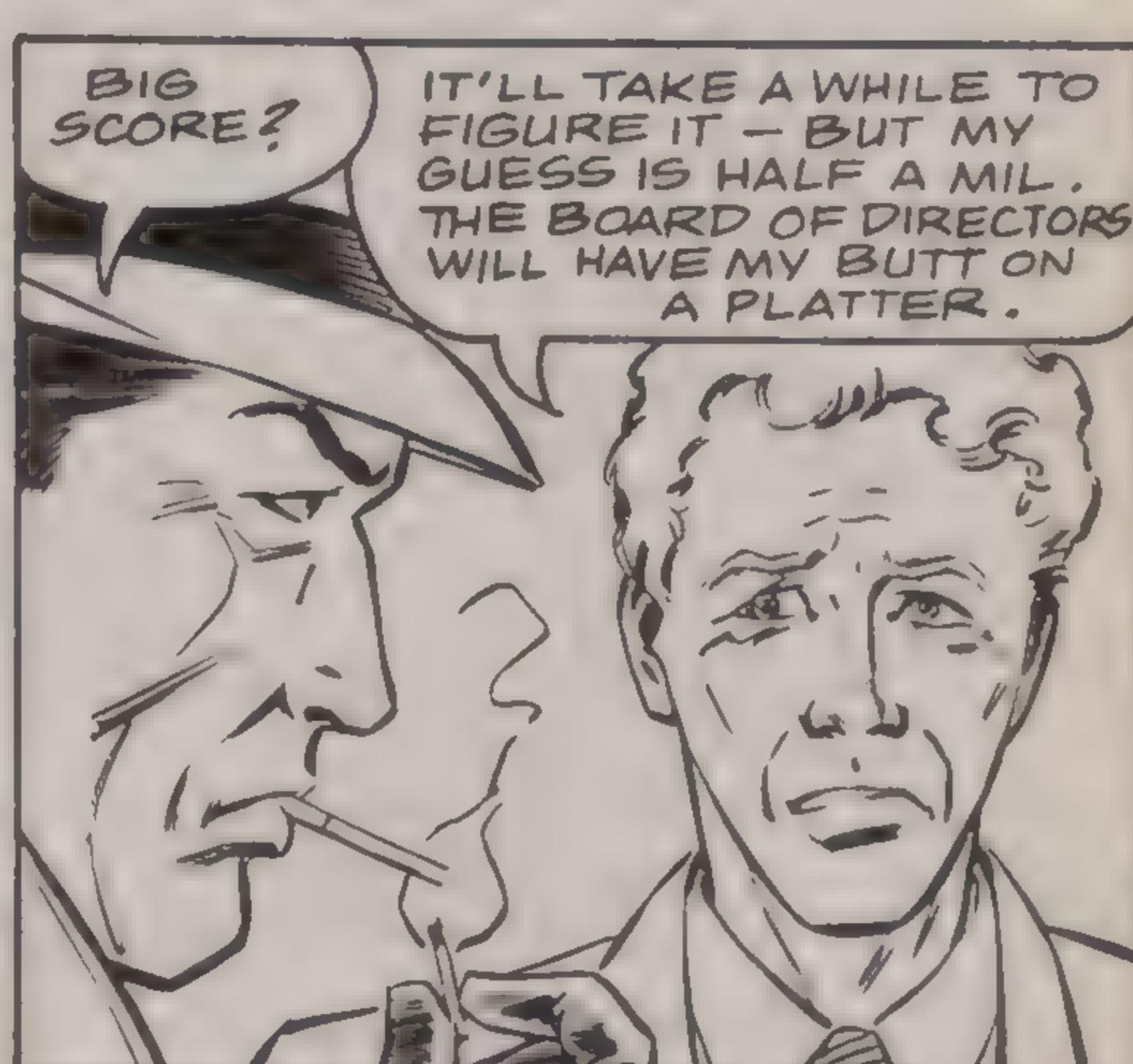
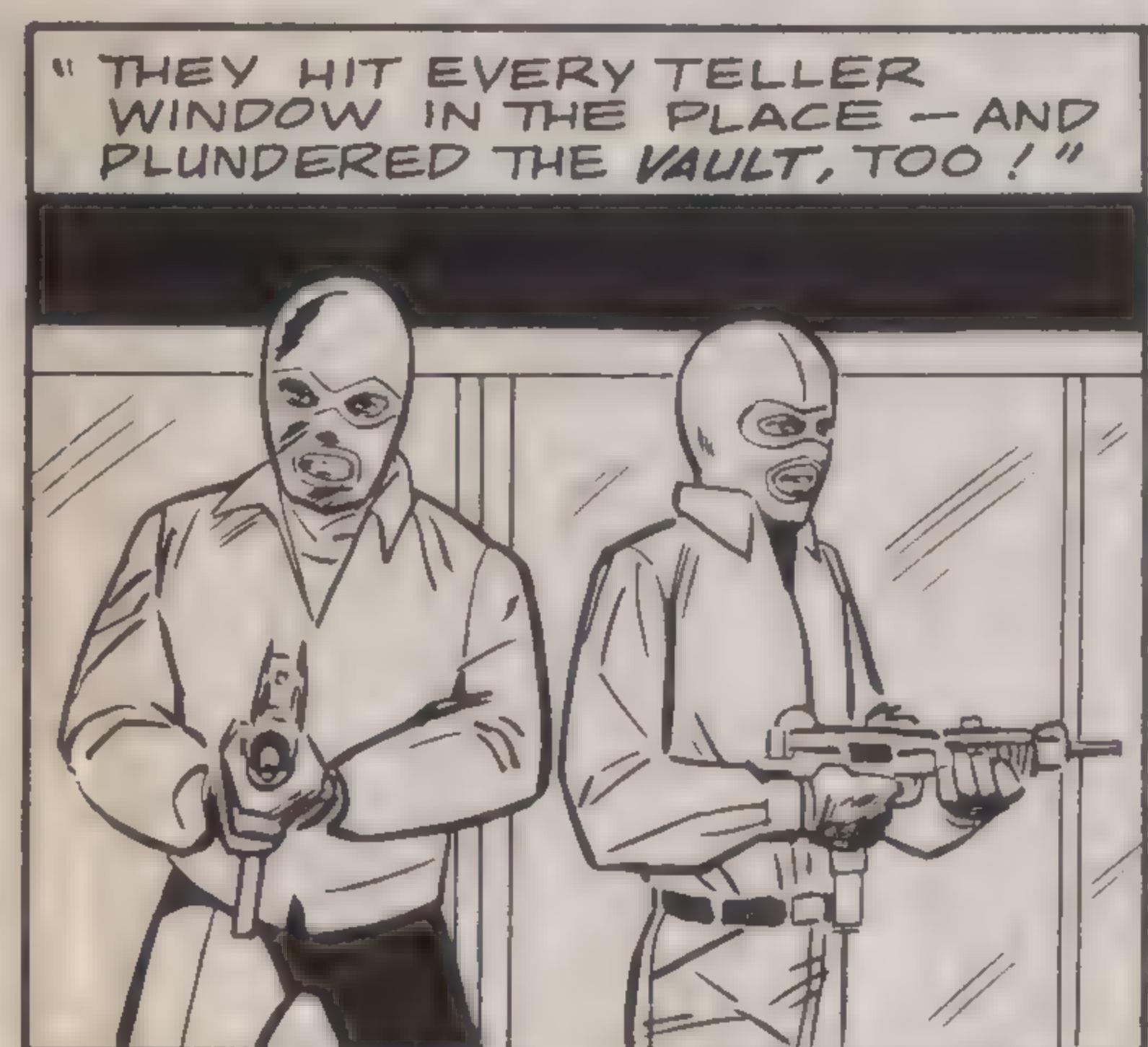
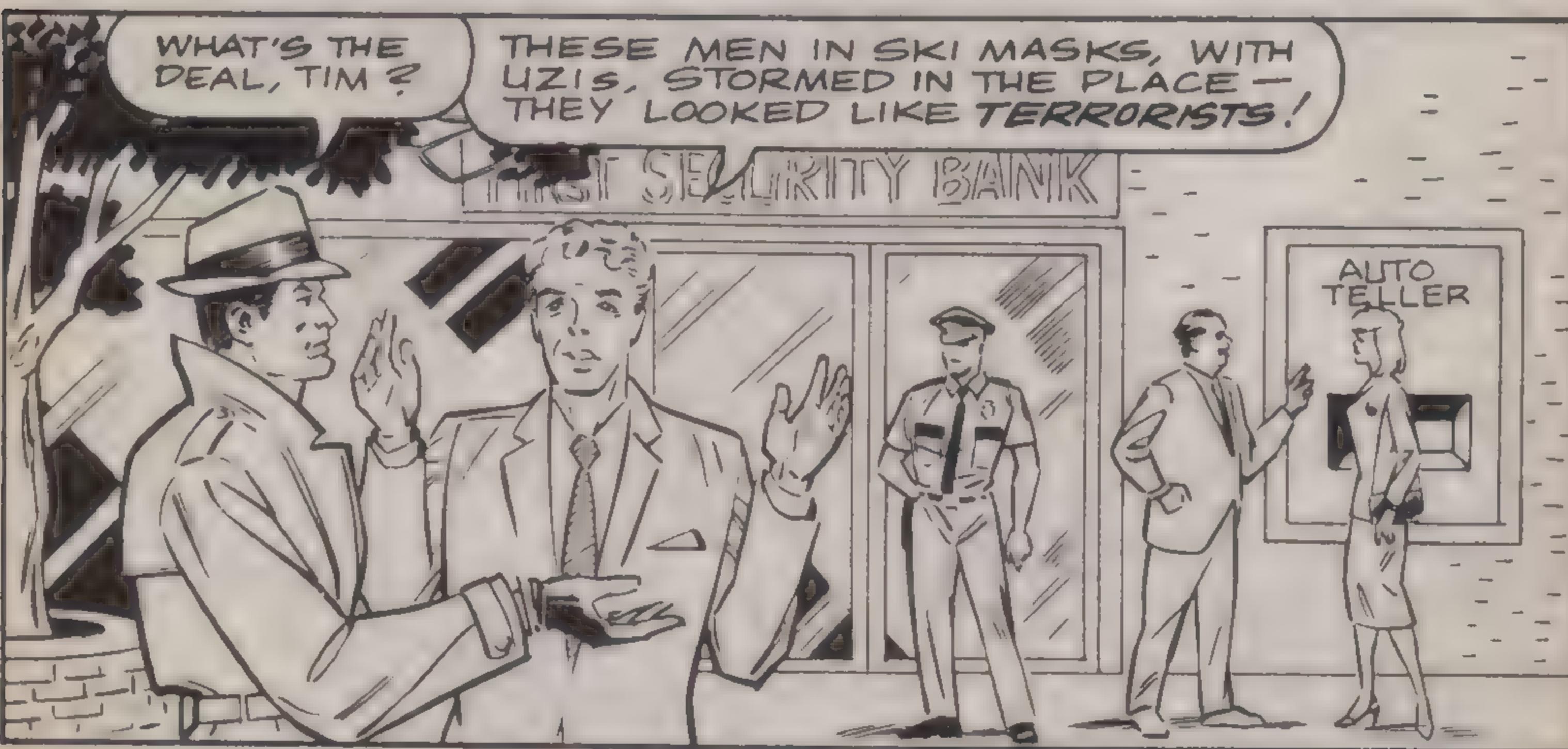
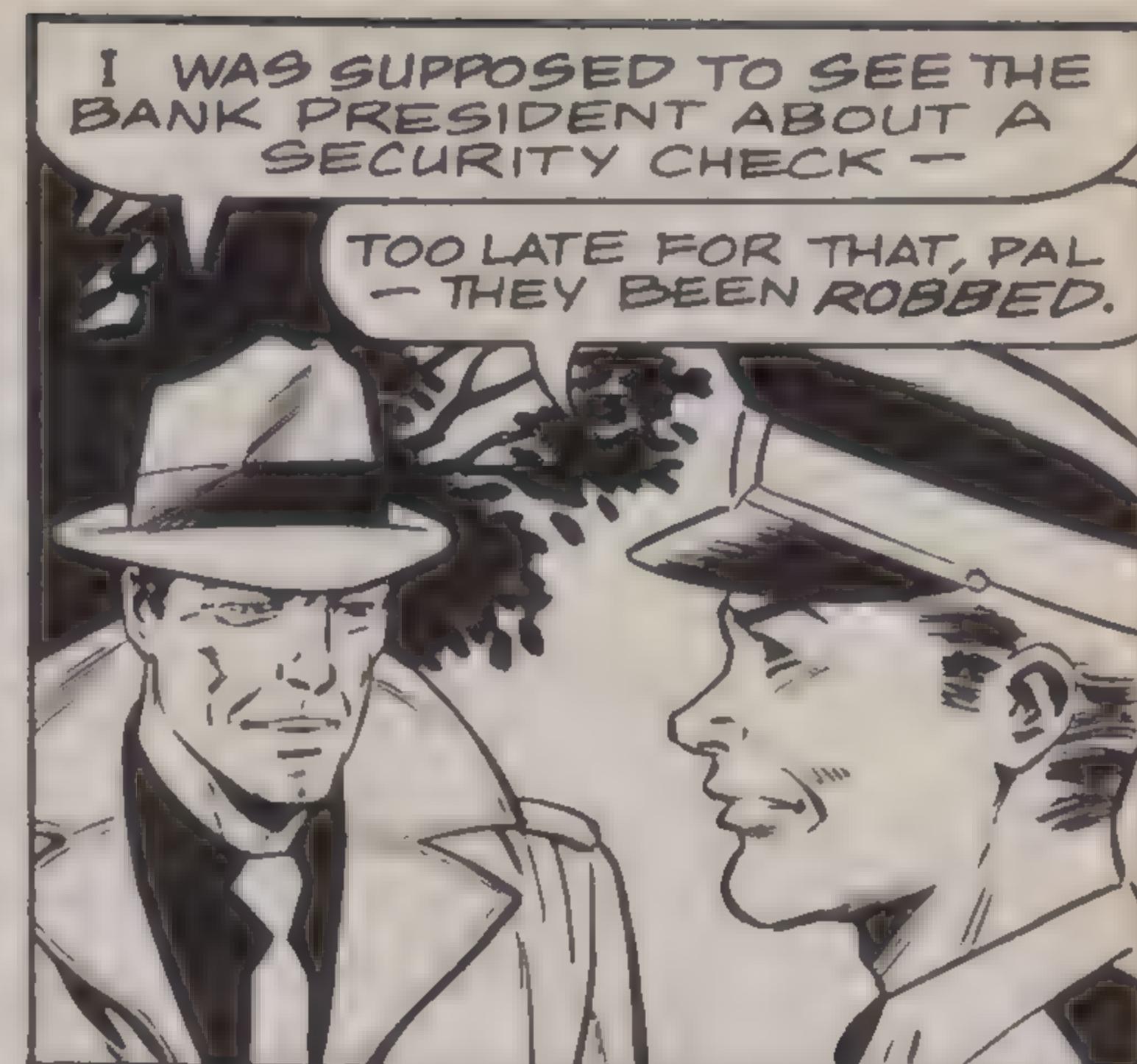
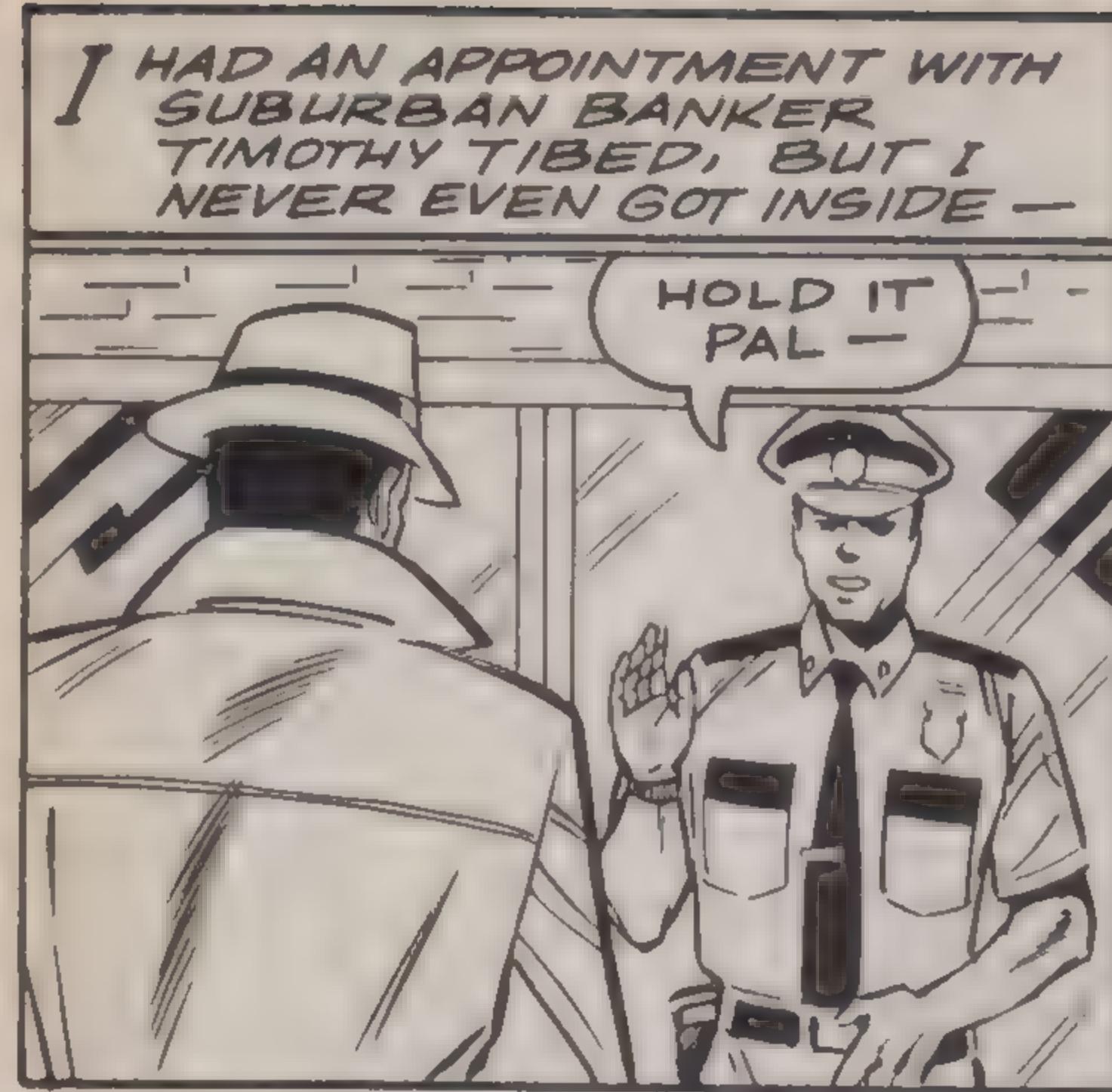
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ms TREE "THE OTHER CHEEK"

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and Terry Beatty

I THINK OF HIM AS MY SON.

HE ISN'T REALLY.
NOT TECHNICALLY. HE'S MY
LATE HUSBAND'S BOY BY
A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE.
I'M JUST HIS LEGAL
GUARDIAN.

LIKE HELL. MIKE TREE, JR.
IS MY SON AND GOD HELP
THE BASTARDS WHO ARE
HOLDING HIM, USING HIM
AGAINST ME.

THEIR TIME TO DIE
FAST APPROACHES.

DYING TIME

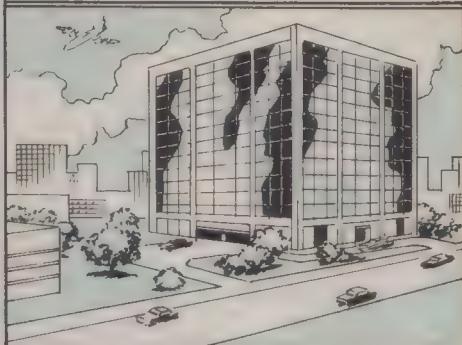
Chapter Six



ORGANIZED CRIME, THEY SAY, IS BIG BUSINESS. AND LIKE ANY BIG BUSINESS, GENERAL AMUSEMENTS, INC., HAS THE TRAPPINGS OF RESPECTABILITY—



FROM A MASSIVE MODERN GLASS-AND-STEEL TOMBSTONE IN THE CORPORATE GHETTO NEAR THE AIRPORT, G. A. INC. OVERSEES A NATIONAL NETWORK OF HOTELS, CASINOS AND MOVIE THEATERS.



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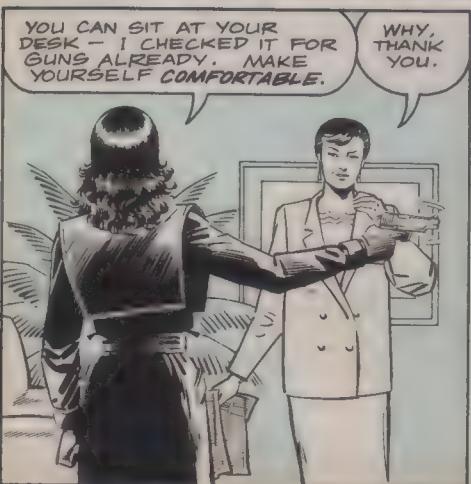


THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THIS VAST CORPORATION — WHOSE HEADQUARTERS WERE ONLY RECENTLY MOVED HERE FROM THE WEST COAST — IS A WOMAN. BUT SHE'LL NEVER MAKE THE COVER OF MS. MAGAZINE.



HER NAME? DOMINIQUE MUERTA.





I'M PREPARED TO PUT A BULLET IN YOUR HEAD JUST LIKE THE ONE I GAVE YOUR BROTHER. BY THE WAY, IF YOU LIVE THROUGH THIS, BETTER BEEF UP THE NIGHT SECURITY ON THIS GLASS BOX.



"I KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT SECURITY MYSELF," I SAID. "MAYBE I COULD ADVISE YOU. STOP BY THE OFFICE — YOU KNOW WHERE IT IS... YOU SENT YOUR PEOPLE THERE, NOT SO LONG AGO — ROGER FREEMONT GREETED THEM. NOW MAKE THAT CALL — "



YOU'RE WRONG. I SENT NO PEOPLE TO YOUR OFFICE. AND IF YOUR BOY'S BEEN KIDNAPPED, I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.



YOU LYING BITCH...



"ONE OF YOUR KILLERS TRIED TO ICE ME IN PUBLIC LAST WEEK — "



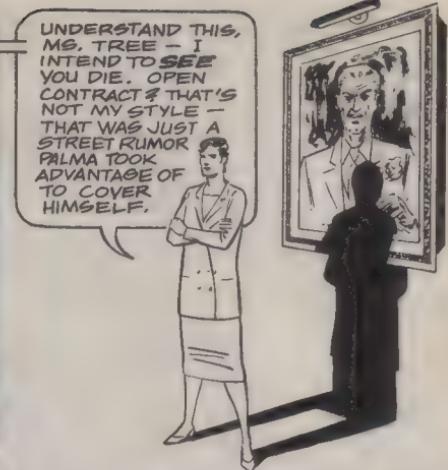
HE WASN'T MINE! I'M NOT THE ONE WITH THE OPEN CONTRACT ON YOU — PALMA IS!

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? YOU AND PALMA ARE IN BED TOGETHER, AREN'T YOU?



"NOT ANYMORE," SHE SPAT. "THAT BASTARD IS OUT OF CONTROL — HE'S A BAD RISK. YOU WANT HIM? I'LL GIVE HIM TO YOU..."





BUT ONE THING I WILL NEVER DO IS STRIKE AT YOU THROUGH AN INNOCENT CHILD. THAT MUCH I PLEDGE YOU. YOUR BOY WILL NEVER SEE HARM AT MY BEHEST.

AND I ASSUME THE SAME IS TRUE OF YOU, WHERE I'M CONCERNED -

WHAT?

YOU SURPRISE ME. A DETECTIVE OF YOUR REPUTATION. WELL, SOONER OR LATER, YOU OR YOUR PEOPLE WILL MAKE THE DISCOVERY -



WITHIN THE HOUR, MY ASSOCIATE DAN GREEN WAS MEETING WITH SENATOR PALMA

I WAS EXPECTING YOUR EMPLOYER, MR. GREEN.

SHE'S BUSY. ANYWAY, YOU'LL SEE HER SOON ENOUGH. I UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE AN OFFER TO MAKE.



YES - IT INVOLVES YOUR EMPLOYER'S STEPSON. THIS KIDNAPPING IS REPREHENSIBLE - DOMINIQUE MUERTA HAS SUNK TO A NEW LOW - EVEN FOR HER.

BUT YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO BE OF HELP -

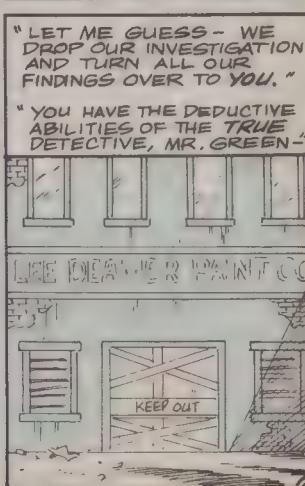
I DON'T HAVE TO PRETEND WITH YOU, DO I, MR. GREEN? I DO HAVE CERTAIN... AFFILIATIONS WITH THE MUERTA CONCERN. POLITICS, BEING WHAT IT IS, REQUIRES AS MUCH.

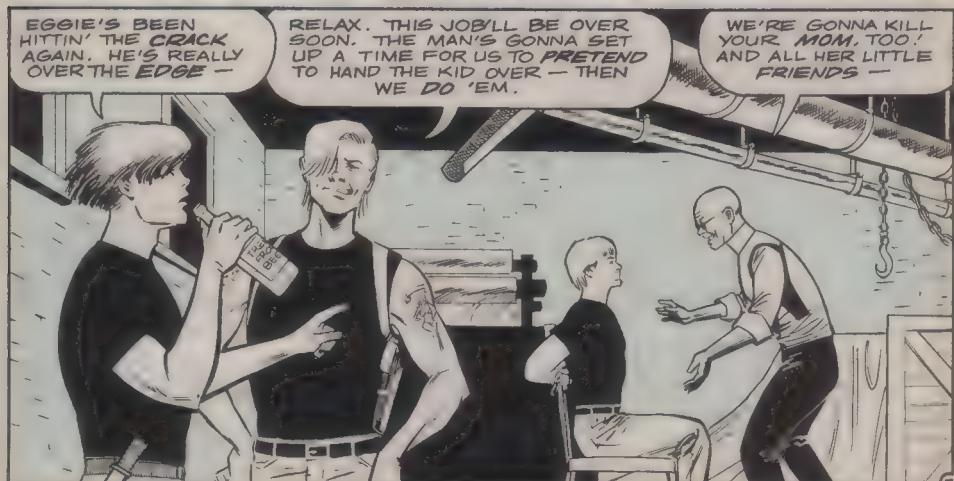
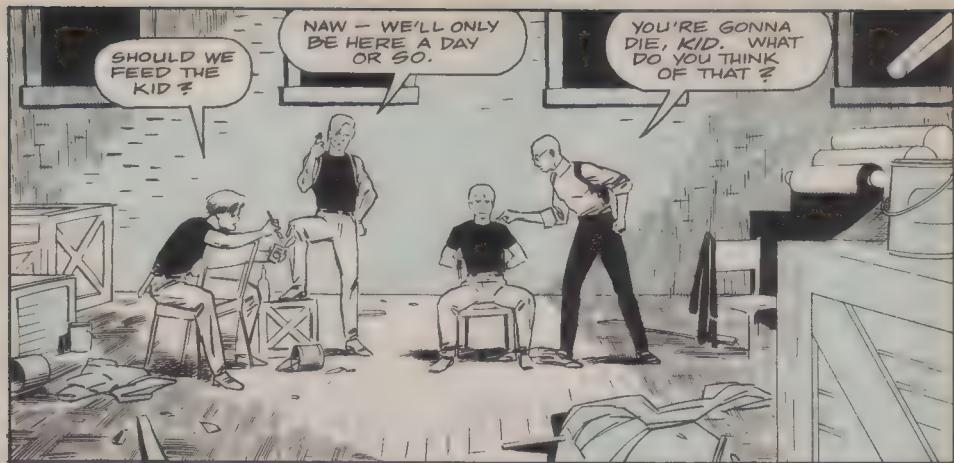


"AND YOU THINK YOU CAN ARRANGE TO HAVE DOMINIQUE MUERTA RELEASE THE BOY?"

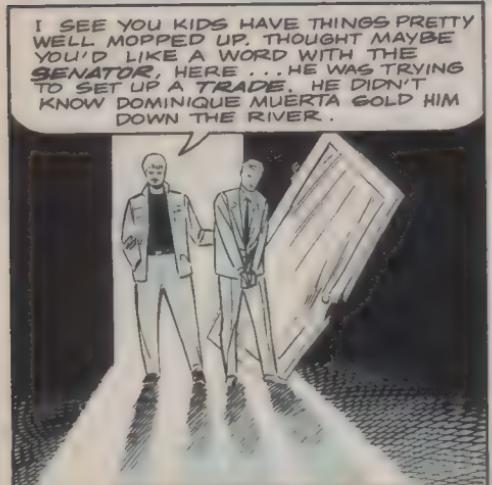
YES - BUT I ASK ONE SMALL FAVOR IN RETURN...

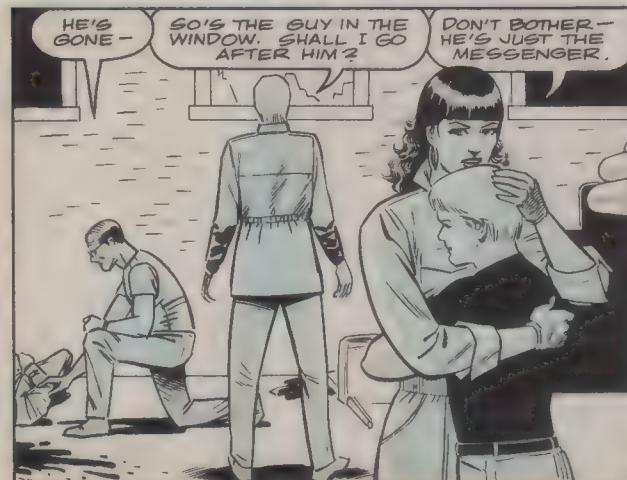
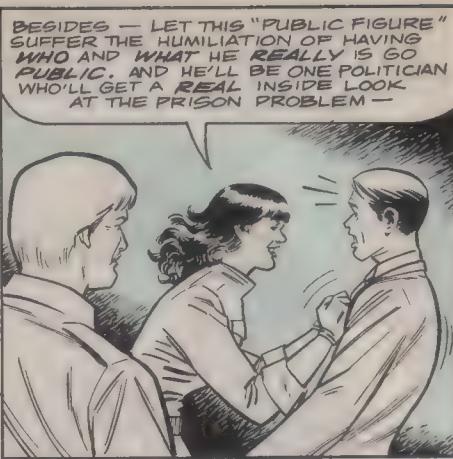
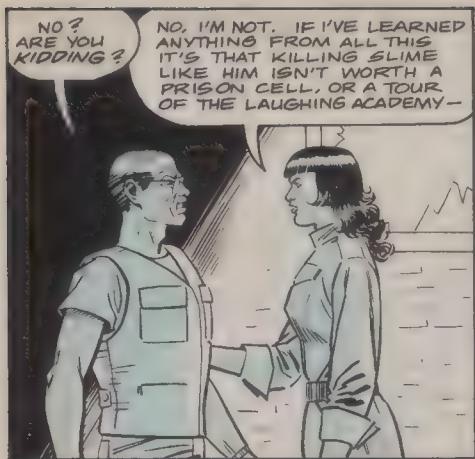
"LET ME GUESS - WE DROP OUR INVESTIGATION AND TURN ALL OUR FINDINGS OVER TO YOU."











THE END
FOR DENNY O'NEIL



Address all letters of comment to:

SWAK

P. O. BOX 1007
MUSCATINE, IA
52761

Dear SWAK,

To my musty memory it seems over 20 years since I've written to a comic book, since those ripe days when character conflict was the Torch and the Thing, and Sgt. Fury approached the ultimate in casual comics violence. Days when I bought Mickey Spillane in hardcover, and found Rex Stout and Dashiell Hammett wan stuff by comparison.

I mentioned reading *Ms. Tree* to a fellow M.A. in English Lit at my office. He established this wasn't some classic collectible (in the All-Star sense) and archly inquired, "You still read comic books?" "Of course — ah, but I forget, you watch television."

So much for snappy repartee I described some of the snappy events of the orgiastic shoot-out in issue 20 *Comics*, he conceded, had changed since he used to read them at his grandmother's grocery store.

And since the days when I defended the Comics Code in my fanzine, *Jedda*, and torqued the administration of my high school with an off-campus publication, *The Javelin*, a tame forerunner of underground journalism.

Coyote, a muddled rehash of sexist 60's ideology, attempted to be "the hero of the 80's" I contemplated who actually filled that rough slot - *Cerebus?* Cutie Bunny? Michael Tree? Miracleman is a nice entry into the stakes I am not ruling out Inspector Gill of the Fish Police, either - a character trapped in a world he doesn't understand and can't leave.

Much the problem of the 80's The 60's promised Consciousness Three and Post-Industrial Take-Off The 70's delivered... yeah. The decade of Reagan is the decade of fantasy withdrawals from reality - people isolating themselves from their environment with Sony Walkmans, baracading themselves in their homes with VCR's and laserdiscs Our very Congress has abdicated responsibility with the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Screw You Act, which drops any pretense of making orderly sense of the American people's mania for demanding services and refusing to pay for them.

Don't blame me, I'm just bitter. Bitter that my job isn't secure. Bitter that I've been bounced from my home of 16 years to make way for a rent four times what I was paying. Bitter that I'm typing on an electronic machine because my right hand can't tolerate a manual keyboard. Bitter that my father died... along with too many friends and relatives... and I will, too, after I fall further apart. Bitter at my helplessness before the looneytunes like our local Leonard Lake (who knew folks I do). Bitter that watching "Casablanca" doesn't do the trick any longer (thank God for "Thief of Bagdad," Korda's)

Ms. Tree has her thumb (ah, m'dear, and what a dainty little digit it is, too... owww) on the wellsprings of bitter. The hard-boiled is a reaction to the painful ugliness twisting at the guts. Pervasive evil is dealt with - at a bruising cost, but dealt with.

Hammett's eloquent understatement of a corrupt universe gives *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Thin Man* a greater thematic depth than anything Hemingway wrote (the greater wordsmith, Hem couldn't open himself to the full range of his bitter vision without noxious slush creeping in; he maintained a very limited range in his best work). Chandler portrayed in the seven and a fragment Marlowe novels the disintegration of a personality under the impact of ever-widening gyres of corruption, of disillusion. The Marlowe who wrapped up the Sternwood problems in *The Big Sleep* wound up in the structured, protected environment of *Poodle Springs*, doing the hardboiled detective's equivalent of basket weaving.

Jim Thompson *The Killer Inside Me* rawly handles the evil within one's self, a bucolic "M," a portrait of a latent psychotic sadomasochist murderer going over the edge and not liking it. As opposed to Mike Hammer, the kill-crazy bastard who enjoys his work and manages to be on the side of the angels (mostly, pity about the guy looking for car keys in *My Gun Is Quick*). Spillane in those first seven novels had a hand on the burning anger, blood-fogged vision of rage that rises from bitter contemplation of pervasive social evil.

The cost... the cost is a straitjacketing of that expansive, universal love written of in Joseph's Tale at the end of *Genesis*, in

The Song of Songs in which God and mankind get into erotic relationship, the Gospels where incarnate Love intersects with life and we are reminded that we are divinely natured in God's image and likeness, as well as shaped from mud and smelling as sweet.

Michael Tree has grown from her simpler beginnings to become a fully developed, fully rounded (sorry, lady, no offense, please take your heel off my Adam's apple) character. You take more chances with her than anyone has with any comics character I can think of. You dare to be psychologically realistic amid the melodrama (doesn't that mean song and play-acting? Her glee club is the chorus of dead victims, as in 'Turandot'?) You dare to have a quite naturalistically bitter angry, humanly flawed (mud as well as godspawn) character quite beyond the norm of post-Marvel screwed-up stereotypes.

It seems to bug hell out of some readers. Kathy Morgan and David Malcolm Porta both reacted strongly to the eloquently complete portrait of Michael Tree's reactions to abortion. The whole issue is maddeningly impossible for people to deal with. Ms. Tree reflects the frustration, rage, pain, the full implications of prenatal infanticide engender. There is no solution to the problems surrounding abortion in any large social sense. There are only individual actions, reactions, accommodations, failures, and stumbling on toward another day, lived ticking minute by minute the best our flawed condition will allow.

If Michael Tree's stated "stand" appears irrational, it also appears sound, true, and organically rising from the situation of her life. Few comics figures (since, perhaps, the death of Walt Kelly) have the depth to so artfully mirror human life.

Small wonder you seriously question her sanity in issue 26.

Other Topics:

The art has progressed significantly from the first days to now. The supporting cast may tend toward the rudimentary, but Tree herself is as richly realized in art as in text. The range of expressions caught in Chapter One of "Heroine Withdrawal" alone show Beatty's developed understanding of the character, along with the heightened beauty he has given her.

I believe the major objections to "Runaway" stem from its compression into a two-issue story. Your three-issue and four-issue stories let the characters expand. As used, Billy Bob was an abbreviated, stock character. Had he and the situation been given the detailed development of "Deadline," it would have been less ragged to have so obvious a character type turn up as the child molester-murderer. The abruptness with which this incomplete, ill-understood fellow turned out to be the nasty (and Mike, Jr. is a prime candidate for therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder, since Billy Bob was very nasty, indeed) felt unsatisfying.

Most news stories about hetero - and homo - sexual child molester murderers are similarly unsatisfying. This does not prevent them from being true - and the horrible truth behind them is one of those impossible, unsolveable, agonizing ugliest that make for the bitterness I've been dwelling on.

Your extended stories remain the ones in which such things as headlines are made of receive their most satisfying treatment.

Has anyone commented on the frequent homage to Ditko in the Mike Mist snippets? The Ms. Tree stories show influences - the Mists show open appreciation.

My thanks for the very strong blends of text and art, the well-realized scripts and snap-shot illustration approach to the panels. The product gives heightened pleasure in rereading - if ultimate compliment for popular lit, then a strong one.

The Shadow and the Batman under Chaykin and Miller are dazzling responses to the contemporary perception of urban life. For their flair, they lack the solid undercurrent of psychological depth and complexity, and long-line narrative strength you have been giving Michael Tree.

(Since Joe Friday was a bachelor, does that make her a bastard, in the Elizabeth Tudor style? and a mean one, too, but

with a beautiful smile. Much nicer than that other kill-crazy PI, who has the smile with all the teeth).

The Dark Knight and the Trilby-hatted avenger play with the issue of urban rage. It's fashionable Ms. Tree encompasses the complexities of the human problem. There's the difference, and strong stuff for comics.

Beats hell out of the TV my friend watches.

Whoever is the hero or heroine of the 80's, Michael Tree (the one still breathing... ah, and such a winsomely expansive breath it is, too *cooph*) is a character for all decades of the human condition.

Some readers appear bent out of shape that Ms. Tree is not a moral exemplar offering enduring solutions to human problems. Enough that she reflects the confusion and attempts of real people grappling with the pain of existence. Not many messiahs in "Hamlet" or "Lear," either.

Yeah, I know, so Zorba spits on my boots...another valid response to bitterness.

Paul E. Moslander, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

I would like to thank you for recognizing (as few critics have) that MS. TREE has been playing in the same league as Miller's BATMAN and Chaykin's SHADOW for some time now. Thematic similarities and seriousness of approach (along with a grounding in "classic" crime fiction) unite us; but our smaller circulation - and more traditional, non-glitzy storytelling techniques - tend to get MS. TREE overlooked in the various ROLLING STONE write-ups and such.

Dear Mr. Freemont:

This letter is in regards to an observation made by you after making love in MS. TREE #28. To be specific: "Finally I was in the mood for conservation."

Well bust my britches Roger old chap, but it was rather too late to conserve much of anything at all if you ask me. You should have thought of that a lot sooner!

P.S.

Dear Max:

The above misprint (it just had to be) was absolutely hilarious. I laughed until I cried. You are going to be hard pressed to live this one down!

Kiril Kundurazieff, POMONA, CA

Kiril, you couldn't be more off-base! We meant to say conservation. Really! No kidding! Roger just meant he, uh, didn't want to waste energy doing anything but talkin' - yeah, that's it, that's the ticket. Ah, what the hell. You caught us with Roger's pants down. But if you think you laughed at our misprint, you should have seen us laugh at the way you spell your last name!

Dear Ms. Tree Creators:

Greetings, I feel as though you already know me. My name is Michelle, called "Mike" because my father wanted a boy. I was a tomboy. My girlfriends admired my athletic ability, the boys respected it. When I got to high school, they wouldn't let me play football or soccer, so I became a cheerleader. Running around in short skirts that should have been illegal gave the boys a new reason to take interest in me. I was very bright and graduated at the top of my class, and proceeded to enter a male-dominated profession. And you guys thought you made up all that stuff?

The similarities end there - my class was in seminary, and I am now an ordained minister. Michael Tree is, in many ways, the antithesis of who I have become. While in many things we share a similar opinion (e.g. abortion), we come to those opinions from very different directions.

What made the difference? For starters, my husband hasn't been murdered. (My husband is "Adam Burchess" -- his only rival is "T.M. Maple," I'm not worried.) I will be very interested to see how you develop the workings of Ms. Tree's mind. I am impressed with how you have handled the hospital and Dr. Syke. So many people treat mental illness as embarrassing, unmentionable, and largely incurable. We are so afraid of things we cannot see - for many, mental illness is not a REAL disease. I am saddened by the number of people who would rather be sick (or even kill themselves) than seek counseling or psychiatric help.

I am a latecomer to Ms. Tree. My interest was piqued by the PI's mini-series, and I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the

whole series over the past several months. If she existed, I'm not sure I'd invite Michael Tree to dinner, but I look forward to reading about her problems and adventures as you unfold them. They make me think. I'll keep reading as long as you keep producing.

One small complaint before I sign-off -- I really didn't like the coloring in #26. I don't care much for sepia anyway, but having only one shade per page detracted from the art, rather than enhancing it. I'd vote for B/W if you can't afford the complete duotone separations.

The Rev. Michelle D. Burcher, GREENVILLE NC

Both Terry and I got a kick out of hearing from a real, live Michelle/Mike. As for the single shades of art on some pages, that is an aesthetic consideration which is at times made a necessity by deadline pressures.

Dear Max & Terry,

Just a quick note to tell you how much I enjoy MS. TREE - it is consistently good and one of my favorite comics.

On duo-tone vs. colour: who cares, just keep up the good work.

On an actress for the MS. TREE movie: an off beat suggestion - Glenda Jackson.

Finding that there just weren't enough MS. TREE comics to read and reread, I tried the MIKE HAMMER comic reprint volume and then one of the novels - good stuff. It helps me understand MS. TREE better too. They renewed my interest in the mystery genre.

By the way, somewhere down the line, how about a story that takes place largely as flashbacks to Mike Tree's life? This could be either a mystery unraveled about his private life alone (exactly how many wives did that guy have?) and/or an exploration of Michael and Mike's life together.

Lastly, on the moral issues brought up in your letter column: What a bunch of old ladies your readers are! Don't they know how to appreciate a little blood-and-guts fiction?

Paul Linhardt, PARIS, FRANCE

Paul, the notion of doing a flashback story about Mike Tree has been one Terry and I've been kicking around for a long time. In fact, we have several notions - including a story (or even series of stories) about Mike Tree's adventures before he met Michael Friday; and also one that would essentially be "Ms. Tree's first case" (although that would not have been her name yet), in which Mike Tree and his secretary Michael Friday become involved in a dangerous case together. And I'm glad that MS. TREE has led you to Mickey Spillane (there are two volumes of the HAMMER strip, however, both published by Ken Pierce) but would suggest that if you really want to understand MS. TREE better, read my novels.

Dear "Ms. Tree" people,

I've been a fan of independent comics for a few years. MS. TREE had been a favorite comic since her debut in Eclipse Monthly. When she gets out of the crazy house, please limit her acts of violence. I want to see Ms. Tree as a detective solving a case without using acts of violence to handle the situation. I would like to see Ms. Tree date a man who won't either betray or use her.

I'm sorry about using the concept of "bondage" in the comic. But like you said if a story should include a scene, you should feature it. Besides, in most mystery-detective stories, the detective (male or female) has been gagged and forced to be tied up due to their profession. In the future, I would like to see Ms. Tree tied to a chair and gagged like in all detective stories.

William Griffith, CHICAGO, IL

Terry was very amused when (quite by accident) your previous letter requesting we do Ms. Tree "bondage" covers (to which I replied we'd not pander toward that particular audience) appeared in an issue with a cover depicting Ms. Tree in a straitjacket.

Hi Max and Terry,

Gotcha! In issue #28, the MIKE MIST story is wrong. If a gun is used as a bludgeon, it would be covered with hair and blood from the victim. That being the case, the wife would be able to

realize her husband was beaten to death with it. If someone was bludgeoned with a gun and then the gun was wiped clean, the police would ignore the gun and find a proverbial blunt instrument such as a statue. Therefore, the MIKE MIST story ending was wrong, because the wife recognized the evidence logically and her husband could have another killer.

Not bad though - most people, even your top two detectives, read the clues wrong. The rest of the issue was your usual excellent writing and artwork. It was nice to see some background of the Tree investigation team lives. A very pleasant change of pace. Keep up the excellent work.

Tom Horvitz, MAYFIELD, OH

It's nice to hear from our old friend from the Cleveland area, Tom Horvitz, but if I were awarding no-prizes, I'm not sure I'd give one out in this case. You must understand that the limited space of a "Mike Mist" sometimes precludes every detail being mentioned - my thinking, in this situation, was that the murderer had wiped the gun of prints (and, at the same time, in that handling, whatever bloody matter was present) but left the gun on the desk, where the police (matching the gun butt to the wound) quickly identified it as at least the likely murder weapon. I stand behind the logic of that minute Mist-ery, at least within the context of its limited form.

Dear Max and Terry,

I am a fairly recent reader of MS. TREE and am enjoying it tremendously. I think having Ms. Tree sent to a mental hospital was a terrific idea and shows good continuous character development. I also like the idea of Ms. Tree handling a case without gunplay involved.

Terry (I'm-not-related-to-John) Beatty is an excellent artist. I enjoy the use of duotone tremendously. It gives a good eerie effect to the book.

From the letter columns I've read I get the idea that many people think that Max agrees with everything Ms. Tree says or does. People, Max is just representing a character here, a complex, interesting, sexy, character. Because Ms. Tree is in favor of the death penalty or vigilantism does not mean Max or Terry are.

I do have one small complaint. Why do you have the letter column split up? It would be better to have all three pages together.

Please keep up the good work. I'll keep spending my hard-earned \$1.70 on it every month.

Vic Mordoh, OCALA, FL

Thanks for your comments, Vic. The notion of splitting up the letters column was to provide some visual variety - so that there would not be three or four solid pages of text in a row. We've had enough complaints about this, however, to give us pause, and are considering making the change. And we hope that you're willing to spend an extra hard-earned 30 cents on this book, since our recent price hike to two bucks.

Dear Max and Terry,

There's one thing that I've noticed after reading comics for six years. There are only liberals reading and writing them. The letter from Robert M. Ingersoll infuriated me. The pure gall of the man to think that it would be an unfair presumption of him to think you condoned Ms. Tree's actions and philosophy. And while Ms. Tree's methods are extreme her purpose is admirable and correct. We are, thankfully, past the age when we coddled criminals and had dreams of reforming them. Even now our legal system is not near strict enough. Especially when bleeding-hearts like Rose Bird are able to prevent the proper punishment of criminals (murderers) simply because she doesn't agree with that punishment! She and Ingersoll must have got their unmitigated gall from the same place.

I would also like to clear something up for every one in comics. Namely the idea expressed on p. 6 and p. 10 of issue #27, "It won't bring Gloria back!" This may be a slap in the face for the liberals (I won't use bleeding-hearts as it is an offensive term) reading this. Punishments and sentences have never been to rehabilitate the offender or bring the victim back. Their purpose is to **punish** the criminal, pure and simple. Nor is the purpose of a punishment to deter crime, although there are examples of this working. When Virginia, my home state, abolished the death penalty for rape, rape increased by 66%. While China, which has the death penalty for rape, had only 10 rapes that they punished with death. This is also with a

considerable population.

The point I am making is that when you punish a criminal you don't hope to bring the victim back or cure the effect of the crime on the victim nor do you look ahead to the next criminal to see how it will effect him/her. You punish that offender to get him/her off the streets and away from decent people for as long as possible.

I am absolutely flustered! "Heroine Withdrawal," wow, what a story. The art keeps getting better too!

I think that it's going to be interesting for Ms. Tree to prove she's sane. I mean she did kill a lawyer and then claimed it was Dominic Muerta!

While Ms. Tree is in the hospital I think that it is a good time to concentrate on Dan Green. He is an interesting character, and one you haven't fully developed. I think you should keep Ms. Tree in the hospital for another couple issues. After all, someone who's killed all those people couldn't be sane. Could she?

B. R. Wilder, ARLINGTON, VA

Your comments on the justice system are interesting, B.R., and I'm sure will prompt some response; a few people have told me I was too harsh in my response to Bob Ingersoll, and maybe I was - but I remain very amused and mildly amazed that someone like Mr. Ingersoll can write tough-minded columns about other people but bristle when those people have the temerity to respond in kind. As you've no doubt seen, we did focus on Dan Green and the other characters during the run of "The Other Cheek"; it gave me a chance to do something I've done a number of times in novels, but which you rarely see in comics: alternate "chapters" between the points-of-view of various characters. Our usual POV character, Ms. Tree, doesn't take over the first-person storytelling till the final chapter.

Dear Mr. Collins and/or Mr. Beatty,

Let me first compliment you on MS. TREE. You are currently producing my favorite comic book, which is rather remarkable, since I came to MS. TREE through the comic book route rather than through hardboiled detective fiction. I grew up primarily thinking of comics storytelling in terms of standard Marvel superheroics and, secondarily, in terms of EC/Warren-type horror stories. Yet now, my favorite comic has little to do with either of these traditions. Admittedly, your protagonist leads a bit more of a Grand Guignol existence than anybody I'm ever likely to meet, but still, the book tastes of reality to me.

I find myself feeling worried for her. Certainly, she can't keep going on the way she has - not and live. The key to her survival and mental health, I think, is in her relationship with her foster-son - she has to let her heart break through again, somehow, both for her sake and the boy's. Otherwise, she's as doomed as Bruce Wayne (still the most primally effective of the original comic-book superheroes).

I hope you're making money doing this.

William L. Dewhurst, SILVER SPRINGS, MD

William, you aren't the only one who hopes we're making money doing this. By ordering a page of original art from Terry (which William did indeed do in a portion of his letter omitted here), you help our artist out; and by supporting other projects of mine - my novels, in particular - you help me out. It's something of a struggle to make a go of it in comics when you're not doing superheroes or funny-animal mutants. I continue to think - and your experience is an excellent example of this - that comics readers who grew up on the more juvenile experience of superhero comics, graduated to the adolescent fantasies of horror fiction, might likely move onto the somewhat more adult fantasy of the crime/mystery story. On the other hand, the influence of both superheroes and EC horror/crime on this comic book is considerable, making it accessible, I think, for longtime readers of either. The single biggest influence on my comics scripting is probably EC/Warren artist/writer Johnny Craig (and he's an artistic influence on Terry); the concept of doing comics novels with chapters is something I learned from THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN and early FANTASTIC FOUR. One of Terry's major influences is Wally Wood, who drew both superhero and horror, and (as our readers have often pointed out) Steve Ditko is an influence Terry shares with Gary Kato. Your comparison of Ms. Tree to Bruce Wayne is apt, and you will soon get a chance to see my version of the latter in upcoming BATMAN issues #402 and #403.



Renegade releases

AUGUST



CASES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES No. 3

Story: Gordon Derry

Art: Dan Day

Cover: Dan and David Day

Dr. Watson is called to France to retrieve the exhausted and ailing Sherlock Holmes. On the return journey, their train makes an unexpected stop at a town where a travelling fair is performing. Among gypsies, Turks, and cossacks, murder rears its ugly head. The only possible culprit seems to be a mythical beast. Despite his illness, Holmes is soon hot on the trail of the killer with Watson scrambling to keep up. Full of exotic characters, pursued across the stormy French countryside, it is a bizarre mystery that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle never lived to tell. This episode of Sherlock Holmes' life appears here for the first time ever.



WORDSMITH

WORDSMITH No. 6

Written by: David Darrigo

Drawn by: R. G. Taylor

Clay tries to drop his pulp heroes and concentrate on serious literature.

Ms. TREE SUMMER SPECIAL No. 1

Written by: Max Collins

Drawn by: Terry Beatty,

with assistance by: Gary Kato

Once again, summer brings a special team-up of Ms. Tree and Mike Mist. This year's is an all-music oriented extravaganza. Also, a unique back-up, The Bobby Darin Story! It's a rock-and-roll summer!!!



MAX COLLINS,
TERRY BEATTY
& GARY KATO
MR. 1
AUG 1
25¢ US CAN

ROCK & ROLL SUMMER SPECIAL

FEATURING
**MIKE MIST
AND THE KEYS**
IN "MUSIC TO
MURDER BY"



PLUS
BOBBY DARIN



THE DAYBREAKERS

.45 CALIBER ACTION AT 45 RPM



MURDER No. 1: 3 Edgar Allan Poe adaptations by Rich Margopoulos and Dan Day, "It Figures" by Alex Toth, "The Death of Thomas" by Allan Petersen, "The Queen of the Hairy Flies" by Brad Foster, Tales of the Siberian Snowtroopers by Jim Stenstrum and Erik Larsen, "Edge of Tomorrow" by Gerry Boudreau and Ernie Colon, and others. Cover painted by Dan & Dave Day.

ETERNITY SMITH No. 2

Written by: Dennis Mallonee
Art by: Rick Hoberg

A confrontation between Eternity Smith and Jason Thorn culminating in an epic struggle between Smith and the cyborg assassin T.I.C.

BLACK ZEPPELIN



BLACK ZEPPELIN No. 6:

DARK LORDS by Gene Day & Doug Moench:
The final collaboration of this legendary duo.

FLIGHT by Dan Day: Dan's new
style, as seen in CASES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

WHO SHALL CRY FOR DAMOCLES: Chapter 3;
by Mark Shainblum & Gabriel Morrisette.

MAXWELL MOUSE FOLLIES No. 4

Written and Drawn by: Joe Sinardi
"For the Woman He Loves" CONCLUSION
Worried about her impending execution,
Monica learns more about the Queen
Mother's illness, Uncle Maurice, and the
"Grievous Insult Law." Meanwhile, Maxwell
discovers that swimming in the perilous mid-
Atlantic is no way to fly to Europe!

Joe Sinardi's MAXWELL MOUSE FOLLIES



A ONE-ISSUE MICRO-SERIES — NEW FROM THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS TEAM!

Pansafredicopacog — or **FRED** for short (which he is). He'll "acquire" anything from anywhere for you—if the price is right.

BIANCA — Fred's partner. She's never met a lock she couldn't pick (except the ones on Fred's house).

Transformers? **Hal** Go-Bots? **Bah!** The **FREDMOBILE** bears them all! It's a sleek, FTL car that can turn into ANYTHING (not to mention, travel through space and time)!



Fred and Bianca aren't without **enemies**, however—not one, not two, but **three** separate agencies want them!

The **INTERPOL** (Interstellar Police) agent wants them—regardless of consequences. Rambo would idolize this guy!

The **I.R.S.** (Interstellar Revenue Service) agent wants them—they haven't paid one thin credit of taxes on their ill-gotten gains!

The **REPO MAN** wants them—and the Fredmobile! It's been five years (relatively speaking) since Fred bought the car and he hasn't made a payment on time (which is ironic, when you think about it). In fact, Fred hasn't made a payment **at all**!

Now all of these "people" are converging here! Fred and Bianca have been hired to steal **Earth's greatest treasure**. Not the Mona Lisa! Not the Venus de Milo! Not even Christie Brinkley! What could it be?

Find out in —

ARISTOCRATIC XTRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES

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